

**LODI CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL "TOWN HALL" CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CARNEGIE FORUM, 305 WEST PINE STREET
MONDAY, MARCH 5, 2001**

A. ROLL CALL

The Special "Town Hall" City Council meeting of March 5, 2001 was called to order by Mayor Nakanishi at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Council Members – Hitchcock, Howard, Land, Pennino and Mayor Nakanishi

Absent: Council Members – None

Also Present: City Manager Flynn, City Attorney Hays and City Clerk Blackston

B. TOPIC(S)

B-1 "Projects for City Budget Fiscal Year 2001-2003"

Mayor Nakanishi welcomed citizens and announced that the purpose of the Town Hall meeting was to discuss capital projects, which include the indoor sports complex, aquatics center, Lodi Lake, DeBenedetti Park, and the Animal Shelter. He explained that at the beginning of the budget process, the City Council adopts goals, objectives, and major projects in which to guide staff in the development of the budget.

City Manager Flynn provided background on the two-year budget cycle. Departments presently are submitting operating budget requests, which will come back to the Council in late March or early April. During this time, Council will be asked for a list of projects and priorities. Already in place are adopted policies that staff follows in terms of capital budgeting. Once the projects are identified, the first stage is to study the project, and then staff will return to Council for approval to move forward on getting the concept design, preliminary cost estimates, and select possible sites. Next would be the design phase, which needs to be determined before any money can be borrowed or grants can be acquired. To date existing City revenues have paid for projects. For example, the cost estimate to build a new public safety building and garage and to refurbish the existing public safety building was \$19 million. At that time, based upon the interest rate of 6.13%, the annual cost was estimated at approximately \$1.7 million per year debt service. Today, with interest rates at 5.11%, the debt service would be \$1.1 million. If an additional \$5 million were added to the amount, the cost would be approximately \$100,000 more than the original estimate received last summer. If the City borrowed the money today, it could borrow it for less than the annual cost (about \$400,000 - \$500,000 less), or it could borrow \$5 million more for almost the same cost. For \$10 million borrowed, the total cost to the City would be an additional \$500,000 a year. However, if the City borrowed an additional \$10 million on top of the \$19 million (for a total of \$29 million), it would cost approximately \$2.3 million a year.

City Manager Flynn explained that some City projects are not funded by the general fund. Street projects are often funded by the federal government through transportation money, which cannot be applied to other projects. The City has approximately \$32 million of Electric Utility money that has already been pre-designated for electric utility projects and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Deputy City Manager Keeter reviewed the list and status of high-priority capital projects developed by the City Council during the 1999-2001 budget process.

Police Lieutenant David Main reported that the current animal shelter was built in the 1960s and was designed to house ten dogs. For 30 years, the City employed only two full-time positions. The shelter has no quarantine kennels or cages, which are required by state law, nor does it meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. There is not enough holding space at the shelter, and animals must be doubled or tripled in cages during peak times. In addition, there is inadequate ventilation and plumbing in the building. Some of the short-term solutions identified are that the City fund vaccination, testing, and altering of all adoptable and treatable animals that enter the shelter; fund and

advertise community spay and neutering programs; add a portable isolation dog kennel and cat cages; create a supervisory position; and develop a community outreach program. The long-term solution is the construction of a new facility that meets all state-mandated requirements.

Deputy City Manager Keeter added that the cost estimate for the new animal shelter is \$2-3 million; however, the project is not yet at the design phase.

Parks and Recreation Director Baltz reported that the City has very few indoor facilities for parks and recreation programs and has several joint use agreements and leases, particularly for gym space. Parks and Recreation crews were at the Grape Pavilion today removing the floors, which is done on an annual basis. In 1997 a group did a study and recommended the construction of an indoor sports facility and complex. The cost estimate came in at just over \$9 million. The area near the Grape Bowl and Lawrence Park was identified as a possible location. Currently, staff has been focused on a campus effect for the facilities, centered around its operations on Stockton Street.

In recent weeks, the City Council took action to approve the West Side Facilities plan, which shows a conceptual plan that includes acreage for aquatic uses. In regard to the 49 acres at DeBenedetti Park, discussions have taken place about having active athletic fields and possibly three 60-foot and three 90-foot diamonds, soccer, and football fields. Staff is working on the improvements associated with the beach area at Lodi Lake. Phase II, consisting of the walkway and pedestrian bike trail, will come to Council in the near future.

Blaine DeJong, President of Boosters of Boys and Girls Sports (BOBS), reported that BOBS was started in 1960 by a small group of civic-minded leaders in order to assist the Parks and Recreation Department in developing and running its youth sports programs. It began with an eight-member board of directors with an operating budget of about \$8,000 a year. Today it has grown into a 25-member board with an operating budget of over \$350,000. Over 1,000 volunteer coaches give countless hours in offering the youth of the community the opportunity to participate in baseball, basketball, cheerleading, football, soccer, and softball. Over 4,000 youth participate annually in these programs. BOBS also offers scholarships to underprivileged youth, and, over the years, has raised approximately \$7 million that has been given back to the City of Lodi to help expand, maintain, and develop youth sports facilities.

This year, BOBS will complete a \$100,000 score board project and PA system at Salas Park; the renovation of the Riney Bender press box at Tony Zupo baseball field; and the renovation of the concession stand and backstop fencing at Kofu Park. Approximately \$100,000 is obtained through fund raising efforts each year and goes directly back into the sports programs and helps keep the cost of programs affordable for the youth of the community. This year was the first time in BOBS history that, due to lack of space, they had to turn away 100 children who wanted to participate in the youth basketball program. DeBenedetti Park is crucial to the continuing youth sports programs. Currently during the baseball season the City is forced to schedule games at Salas Park that end after 10 p.m. on weeknights because of the lack of lighted facilities. The longer it takes to develop DeBenedetti Park, the more likely the surrounding area will develop and opposition by future residents to a lighted facility will occur. The City of Lodi does not own any hardwood courts. If not for the use of the Grape Festival Pavilion, the basketball programs would not exist. It is proposed that the indoor sports facility be a multi-function facility capable of handling not only basketball, but other indoor sports as well. The Lodi City Swim Club also must rely on a joint use agreement with the Lodi Unified School District (LUSD) in sharing the use of the only 50-meter pool in the City. The Recreation Commission recently had two workshops to prioritize the needs of the sporting community in Lodi. The result of those workshops were that the community greatly supported the development of DeBenedetti Park, an indoor sports facility, and an aquatics center.

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John Johnson, representing the Lodi Sports Foundation, reported that the group has been in existence since 1995, and in the last two years, it has contributed approximately \$20,000 to the community in a variety of projects: completion of the infield renovation at Zupo; a portion of the score board project at Salas Park; numerous scholarships to the youth of the community; contributions to Lodi High School for mats used for pole vaulting and high jumping; and a contribution to the Lodi City Swim Club for new software. Mr. Johnson submitted a letter dated May 19, 1997 (filed) that indicated the Foundation's support of the indoor sports complex at the Parks and Recreation Corporation Yard, the need for an aquatics center, and the development of DeBenedetti Park. The Foundation's mission is one of support for the overall community and the building and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities. The Foundation would like to see all three of these projects put onto the City's priority list. Mr. Johnson stated that the feasibility study for the indoor sports center has been completed. Diede Construction did a cost estimate and design for a 73,000 square-foot building, which would house three basketball courts, indoor soccer, roller hockey, and a climbing wall for \$4.4 million.

Ken Sasaki, Chairman of the Recreation Commission, emphasized the importance of evaluating recreation programs to determine the impact they make toward alleviating community problems. New sports facilities will provide the beginning of making Lodi a better place in which to live.

Randy Snider, Chairman of the Swimming Pool Task Force, reported that the Task Force was formed last year by the City Council. There have been progress delays, due to recent changes in the Parks and Recreation staff, and they anticipate conducting their second meeting in the near future. The aquatics facilities in the community are very much lacking, with the only two facilities being Lodi Lake and Blakely Parks. The goal of the Task Force is to determine general needs and assess a potential location for an aquatics center.

Bob Raingruber, representing Friends of Lodi Lake, spoke in support of the indoor sports facility, aquatics center, and DeBenedetti Park. The recommendation of the Friends is to give priority to these three projects and consider development of the west side of Lodi Lake at a later time.

Sue Pixler, member of the Animal Shelter Task Force, which was created by the Mayor last November, submitted their initial report to the City Council (filed). Ms. Pixler claimed that Lodi does not have an animal shelter, but rather, it has a 30-year old wood frame building sitting on a porous concrete slab that was built as a dog pound. It was designed and used only to impound dogs that were vicious, stray, and harassing livestock. It was not built to keep animals healthy, to reunite them with owners, nor to keep them alive. It was a holding facility until the animals could be euthanized, and there were no provisions for cats until 1983. Since the pound was constructed, Lodi's population has doubled, and the overcrowding in the shelter has led to the spread of disease and euthanasia as a means of population control. The state goal for the year 2010 is that there will be no more euthanasia in municipal shelters. A critical part of that goal is an aggressive education and spay/neuter program. The recommendation of the task force is that Lodi fund and build a new animal shelter.

RECESS

At 8:10 p.m., Mayor Nakanishi called for a recess, and the City Council meeting reconvened at 8:20 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Ken Bingaman, 306 Bella Vista Drive, Lodi, spoke in support of all three projects and suggested locating the swimming pool downtown. He urged Council to move the projects forward quickly, as they have been discussed for many years.
- Victor Schuh, President of the Lodi City Swim Club and member of the Recreation Commission, 1231 Heidelberg Way, Lodi, agreed that the pool facilities in Lodi are inadequate. The community needs a pool, not only for competitive swimming, but for recreation purposes as well. The joint use agreement with LUSD is not working. Mr. Schuh also spoke in support of the indoor sports facility and DeBenedetti Park. He suggested putting lights in DeBenedetti Park immediately so future residents will be aware of the impact.
- Bob Johnson, 1311 Midvale Road, Lodi, submitted information to the City Council (filed), including one page of the 1993 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and an article from USA Today listing the top reasons kids say no to drugs -- 30% of which responded that it was due to sports activities. At two public meetings of the Recreation Commission citizens in the audience indicated a willingness to consider paying additional funds to build and operate recreational facilities. There was open discussion about the possibility of additional sales tax and/or a bond. Mr. Johnson commented that the City of Davis recently placed a bond request on the ballot for parks maintenance.
- Monica Schuh, 1231 Heidelberg Way, Lodi, stated that she has been a swimmer on the Lodi City Swim Club for five years. The aquatics center will benefit, not only the Swim Club, but also lifeguarding, water polo and swimming lessons.
- Jean May, 524 Connie, Lodi, mother and grandmother of swimmers, stated that the community has expressed support for adequate swimming facilities for many years, but it has not been acted on by the City. She asked Council to make it the priority that the citizens have deemed it for many years.
- Anne Kemether, 1409 Champagne Court, Lodi, stated that she chose to live in Lodi because of the recreation opportunities; however, there is nowhere for families to go to enjoy water. Blakely Park is too crowded and Lodi Lake has pollution problems due to the geese. Lodi needs an indoor sports facility and lighted playing fields. She suggested including a handicap ramp at the aquatics center.
- Patty Steward, 1126 Brighton Way, Lodi, stated that she has been addressing the City Council and the Recreation Commission regarding youth sports and activities since 1992. There are a large number of volunteers that are willing to be a part of the sporting community. She urged Council to approve the indoor sports facility, aquatics center, and DeBenedetti Park for the future of the community.
- Jim Casey, 812 Virginia, Lodi, reported that the joint use agreement with LUSD is not working because the high schools need the pools for their own programs. Mr. Casey stated that the aquatics center has been placed on the Council's priority list since 1993, but it continually gets removed. He felt that all three projects should be placed on the priority list and left there until they are completed.
- Carrie Anderson, Secretary for Animal Friends Connection, 17518 Bowser Road, Lodi, stated that the group looks forward to continuing the working relationship it has with the City of Lodi Animal Services in order to achieve the goal of becoming a no-kill City through aggressive spay and neuter programs and increasing adoptions of shelter animals. Animal Friends Connection urges the City Council to commit to building a new shelter and to the recommended short-term improvements while the new shelter is in the planning and building stages.
- An unidentified speaker voiced complaints that the City has been able to find money for a parking garage on Sacramento Street and a \$150,000 bus stop; however, they have chosen not to build a new animal shelter that the City desperately needs.

- Luanne Casey, educator at LUSD, 812 Virginia Avenue, Lodi, commented that Lodi is a family community and should always place the needs of children first when it comes to setting priorities. She indicated that these projects have been talked about too long already and should be acted on quickly.
- Barbara Steinheimer, with Animal Friends Connection, 1410 Mettler Road, Lodi, emphasized the importance of teaching children to care about animals and to treat them humanely. She urged the Council to approve the construction of a new Animal Shelter.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

- Council Member Howard agreed with the Friends of Lodi Lake recommendation to delay further development of the west side of Lodi Lake until the other projects are completed. She expressed hope that the animal shelter can be added to the list; however, she felt that the indoor sports facility and aquatics center should take higher priority.
- Council Member Land explained that some of the projects that were done in the downtown area were not paid for through the City's general fund. The new movie theater is a private enterprise, the train depot was paid for with Measure K and other federal grant funds, and property owners taxed themselves for improvements on Cherokee Lane and the downtown area. The recent bus shelter cost included a public arts program and street improvements. During the last ten years, almost every park in Lodi has been renovated. The City has given \$250,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to LUSD to improve their playground equipment. Peterson Park has been completed and Katzakian Park should be completed in July. Council Member Land suggested that additional large signs be posted at DeBenedetti Park informing the public that it will be a lighted park. Mr. Land expressed his support of all the projects presented at this evening's meeting.
- Council Member Hitchcock commented that it is the involvement of the community that makes Lodi the special place it is. She reported that all of these projects were planned for in the 1991 Master Plan and included a way to pay for them through development impact fees. Ms. Hitchcock requested information on how much money the City has collected that can be put toward these projects. She noted that because development impact fees have not been updated since 1991, there are now insufficient funds to pay for the projects. She expressed support for each of the projects and noted that funding is an important consideration. She asked the audience if they would support an increased sales tax, utility user tax, or an additional charge on property tax.
- Mayor Pro Tempore Pennino stated that he is more supportive of building better schools in the community than asking for a tax increase to pay for park and recreation programs. He noted that the City has more sources of funding to build facilities than the School District does. It is not likely that voters would support two tax measures at the same time. He spoke in support of an indoor sports facility located in the downtown area, but was opposed to the idea of an aquatics center in that location due to the close proximity to railroad tracks and the resulting vibrations that trains cause. An outdoor 50-meter pool with slides, etc. would more appropriately be located on the west side. He pointed out that the Council has not approved a new animal shelter and it would be premature for the Animal Shelter Task Force to look at sites and designs at this time. He indicated that more consideration should be given to participating with the County in one animal shelter facility. He agreed that signs and lights should be placed at DeBenedetti Park as soon as possible so that future residents are aware of the plans.
- Mayor Nakanishi added that he would encourage the Council to place all of these projects in the plan and to move forward with the study and design phases so that staff can work on the funding aspect.

C. COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None.

D. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

Susan J. Blackston
City Clerk